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# The Death March

## A Pointy Hat Fighter Lich

Even achieving undeath is not enough for a fighter to actually become a Death March. Death Marches are liches that achieve true undeath by conscription.

A fighter who seeks undeath as a way to unnaturally extend their life must undergo a long journey marked by death at every step. Their ritual to achieve lichdom consists in challenging fellow masters of the fighting arts, those who have mastered all different styles used in battle, and ending their lives. Once they've slain the last one of these fighters, there's just one last fighter to put to the sword: themselves.

If the foes they've fought against proved to be worthy opponents, the fighter will rise again in undeath, but not as a true lich. Their bodies won't decay and they'll retain the faculties and fighting prowess they had in life, but they will find true death if slain, as they don't have a phylactery. The second stage of achieving true lichdom can then begin: conscription.

The undead fighter must continue to slay worthy opponents. If slain by the fighter, these opponents rise in undeath too as unliving puppets of the undead fighter, retaining all fighting abilities they had in life. These are the undead fighter's phylacteries. This is what constitutes a Death March lich.

The Death March amasses a veritable army of undead, armed forces of the dead that follow its every command. The more are conscripted into the Death March, the stronger the Death March grows, and the more options for a phylactery the lich has if slain. Any member of the Death March can house the soul of the lich. But there's a catch.

All members of the Death March must remain in relative proximity of each other to stay undead, which stops the lich from stashing away corpses in remote locations to use as emergency phylacteries, but that isn't the reason why a Death March must constantly add new members to its undead forces. The body currently housing the soul of the lich is the only body free from decay; all other members of the Death March, though undead, slowly rot away. The wounds sustained in combat don't close with time: they are, in a way, in a slow death march of their own, crawling towards true death. If a Death March wishes to continue to enjoy the benefits of lichdom, it must constantly add new members to its forces.

This makes Death Marches, paradoxically, one of the types of lich that is most active in the goings-on of the living, as they thrive when geopolitical conflict arises. Death Marches are the first to the battlefield when war erupts between two nations, and many Death Marches stoke the flames of war themselves, pushing conflicts to escalate into all-out war so they may find more conscripts to their army.

Most civilized societies see the cuse of Death Marches in armed conflict as deeply inhumane, seeing as those who fall to the undead's swords aren't even afforded the meager comfort of resting in death, but few are above using them when truly desperate. When the enemy is at your doorstep and all hope is lost, who is above accepting any help? Even if it's the help of death itself.

And so, Death Marches become an eternal standing army, constantly traveling in search for new members to add to their death battalions, robbing more and more fighters of their final rest until they rot away or their body becomes the new vessel of the commander who conscripted them into service beyond death.

## DEATH MARCH

*Medium Undead, Any Alignment*

**Armor Class** 20 (plate, shield)
**Hit Points** 199 (21d10 + 84)
**Speed** 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 22 (+6) | 18 (+4) | 22 (+6) | 16 (+3) | 11 (+0) | 15 (+2) |

**Saving Throws** Str +12, Con +12
**Skills** Athletics +12, Insight +9, Intimidation +8, Perception +6
**Damage Resistances** Cold, Necrotic
**Damage Immunities** Poison; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from nonmagical attacks
**Condition Immunities** Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Paralyzed, Poisoned
**Senses** Darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15
**Languages** The languages it knew in life
**Challenge** 20 (25,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +6

***Action Surge (3/day).*** The Death March takes one additional action. If the Death March makes an attack action, it adds its proficiency bonus (+6) to the damage roll. If the Death March brings a hostile creature to 0 hit points, it regains one of the expended uses of this ability.

***Army of Phylacteries.*** A destroyed Death March instantly takes over the body of a previously-created phylactery within 300 feet. The new body of the Death March has the Death March stat block (excluding size and armor class), regardless of what stat block the phylactery had before. If no phylacteries are within 300 feet of the Death March at the moment its body is destroyed, it takes the Death March 1d8 days to inhabit its closest phylactery.

***Artillerist.*** The Death March ignores the reloading property and need for ammunition of any weapon.

***Indomitable (3/day).*** The Death March can reroll a saving throw that it has failed. If it does so, it must use the new roll. If the Death March brings a hostile creature to 0 hit points, it regains one expended use of this ability.

***Legendary Resistance (2/Day).*** If the Death March fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

***Turn Resistance.*** The Death March has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

***Waking Arsenal.*** The Death March can change what weapon it is wielding as a free action and can weild a weapon with the two-handed property while using a shield.

***Ways of War.*** At the end of a long rest, the Death March chooses 3 fighting styles available to the fighter class. It enjoys the benefits of those fighting styles until the end of its next long rest.

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The Death March makes four weapon attacks.

**Maul.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

**Rapier**. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. 10 (1d8 + 6) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

**Crossbow**. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (1d8 + 6) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

### Bonus Actions

**Second in Command.** The Death March empowers one of its phylacteries within 300 feet of the Death March that it can see. The empowered phylactery gains 4d10 temporary hit points and adds +3 to all of its weapon attack and damage rolls. The Death March cannot empower more than one of its phylacteries at a time. If the Death March uses this bonus action on another phylactery, the previous phylactery loses the benefits it previously enjoyed.

**Second Wind (3/day).** The Death March regains 1d10 + 20 hit points. If the Death March brings a hostile creature to 0 hit points, it regains one expended use of this bonus action.

### Legendary Actions

The Death March can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Death March regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Attack.** The Death March makes a weapon attack.

**Riposte (Only after a failed attack against the Death March).** The Death March makes a weapon attack with advantage against the creature that tried to attack it.

**Maneuver (Costs 2 Actions).** The Death March moves up to half of its movement without provoking attacks of opportunity.

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